

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | MONDAY | 1 JANUARY 2024

## WEATHER

Max: 28.9°C  
Min: 16.1°C  
RH: 48%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Mist and fog.  
Max/Min  
temp. 29/15°C

## ASTROGUIDE

Shobhakruti: Dakshinayana  
Tithi: Margasira Bahula  
Pancharati till 2.29 pm  
Star Makha till 8.36 am  
Varjyan: 5.37 pm to 7.26 pm  
Durmuhuram: 12.41 pm to 1.25 pm; 2.53 pm to 3.37 pm  
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
Jamadi us Sani 18, 1445 H  
**PRAVERS**  
Fajar: 5.41 am  
Zohar: 12.29 pm  
Asar: 4.16 pm  
Maghrab: 5.58 pm  
Isha: 7.11 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 05.37 AM  
**SUNSET TODAY** 18.43 PM  
**MOONRISE** 12.56 AM  
**MOONSET** 01.00 PM

## COUNTER POINT



What is your New Year resolution... NDA or I.N.D.I.A?

## IN BRIEF

**Pak separatist group banned**

**New Delhi:** In a decisive step, the government on Sunday declared pro-Pakistan separatist group Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH), founded by late hardline separatist Syed Ali Shah Geelani, as a banned organisation for the next five years. The action, announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is a response to the group's involvement in fomenting terrorism and spreading anti-India sentiment.

■ Full report on Page 7

**Panagariya chief of finance panel**

**New Delhi:** The government on Sunday appointed former Niti Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya as the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission.

Joint Secretary in the finance ministry Ritvik Ranjan Pandey will be the secretary to the panel.

■ Full report on Page 9

**3 held for raping IIT-BHU student**

**Varanasi:** Two months after a woman student was allegedly gang-raped inside the IIT-BHU campus here, police have arrested three men in connection with the incident, officials said on Sunday.

Following the arrests, opposition parties hit out at the BJP government alleging that the accused persons are linked to the ruling party.

## ESOTERIC | BELIEFS



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**Kim: Prepare for possible 'war'**



## SPORTS | 10

**Gavaskar criticises Gill's aggressive approach in Tests**

## TABLOID

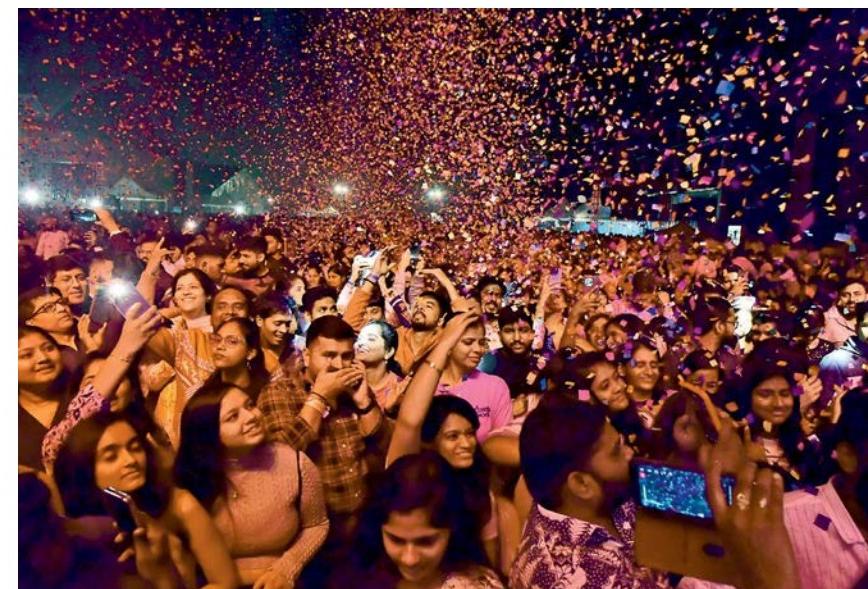
**The quest for happiness**



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## Happy New Year!



DC wishes its readers a Happy New Year.

A crowd cheers during the New Year celebrations at Hitec City, Hyderabad, on Sunday. More on Page 2

## NAVY STEPS UP MARITIME VIGIL AFTER ATTACKS

**PAWAN BALI | DC**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 31

The Indian Navy on Sunday announced substantial escalation in maritime surveillance efforts in the Central and North Arabian Sea following the recent drone attack on the merchant vessel MV *Chem Pluto* and the hijacking of MV *Ruen*. The Navy stated that these incidents signify a notable shift in maritime activities closer to the Indian exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Indian Navy disclosed that it has deployed task groups comprising destroyers and frigates for maritime security operations and to provide assistance to merchant vessels in the event of any incident.

Aerial surveillance, facilitated by long-range maritime patrol aircraft and Remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs), has been intensified to achieve comprehensive maritime domain awareness. The Navy emphasised close coordination with the Coast Guard to ensure effective surveillance of the EEZ.

Sources reported that the Indian Navy is conducting inspections on suspicious boats to safeguard Indian merchant vessels and mariners.

■ Page 7: Surge in maritime security incidents



Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a collage of photographs encapsulating his 2023. This picture was taken in Lepcha, Himachal Pradesh, when he spent Diwali with soldiers.

— PTI

lighted the surge of new songs, bhajans, and poems inspired by 'Shri Ram' and Ayodhya.

"During the last few days, many new songs and new bhajans have been composed on 'Shri Ram' and Ayodhya. Many people are also writing new poems. There are many experienced artistes in it and new emerging young artistes have also composed heartwarming bhajans. I have also shared some songs and bhajans on my social media," he said.

Modi pointed out the art world is actively participating in this historic moment in its unique style. "One thing comes to my mind... could we all share all such creations with a common hashtag? I request you to share your creations on social media with the hashtag 'Shri Ram Bhajan'. This compilation will turn into a flow of emotions in which everyone will be immersively imbued with the ethos of Ram," the Prime Minister said. He also emphasised on physical and mental health and highlighted several unique efforts for 'Fit India'.

## 3-pronged strategy for fast Dharani 'redressal'

**N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

The Revanth Reddy-led Congress government is likely to adopt a three-pronged strategy, bringing in some immediate measures while working on its promise to replace the Dharani portal, the land records system.

The strategy includes a forensic audit on three lakh acres of land added to the portal in the past year, including those in and around Hyderabad where influential people in the previous BRS government allegedly became the ultimate beneficiaries.

These land parcels were kept out of the portal at the time of its launch, cutting disputes over and discrepancies in the land title.

### 3-STEP APPROACH

- Forensic audit on three lakh acres of land added to Dharani in the past year, including near Hyderabad, ultimately benefiting influential BRS leaders.
- Create appellate provisions where landowners can lodge complaints instead of having to go to court.
- Redressal mechanism to be created within the law.
- Congress' Bhoomata to be implemented after consultations

The government has been actively pursuing a method to create appellate provisions within the existing Dharani modules as an immediate course correction measure.

The ultimate objective of bringing in Bhoomata, the Congress' version of Dharani, would be implemented after wideranging discussions with all stakeholders on the lines of Koneru Ranga Rao land reforms committee appointed by then Chief Minister Dr Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy.

The basic flaw in the Dharani portal, according to revenue officials, is the lack of appellate provisions that were deliberately removed by the previous government under the guise of eliminating litigation and manipulation of records.

■ Page 3: 'Nearly 20L acres not entered in Dharani'

## Isro to launch satellite for study of black holes today

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 31

After landing on the Moon and sending a probe to study the Sun, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) will ring in the New Year on Monday with the launch of its first dedicated scientific mission to shed new light on the mysteries of black holes.

Breaking another barrier, Isro will also launch a satellite built entirely by women on Monday.

Incidentally, Aditya-L1, Isro's sun lab, will reach its space home about 1 million km away from Earth, on January 6.

The 44-metre Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle's 60th flight (PSLV-C58), to be launched from the spaceport at Sriharikota, will



**THE 44-METRE** Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle's 60th flight (PSLV-C58), to be launched from the spaceport at Sriharikota, will carry the 570-kg X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) to space. It will release the XPoSat in a low Earth orbit of 650 km, 21 minutes after lift-off.

9.10 am on Monday.

It will release the XPoSat in a low Earth orbit of 650 km, 21 minutes after lift-off. The rocket, with a mass of 260 tonnes, will then release 10 other satellites.

The PSLV's fourth stage will then be brought down to an altitude of 350 km to conduct space experiments.

■ Page 3: First all-women satellite to launch today

## Chintapalli cops desperate to rid suspension 'jinx'

## Award-winners try to fix 'vastu'



Chintapalli Police begin levelling the ground.

Union ministry of home affairs in its 'Smart List' for good performance by deploying technology. But what followed was a series of allegations and subsequent suspensions of multiple sub-inspectors (SIs) for alleged wrongdoings.

In all, seven staff members, including SIs, constables and writers, have been suspended.

■ Page 3: Cops want to bid adieu to bad luck

Chintapalli Police and levelled the premises of the police station floor. The Chintapalli police station was in the spotlight after being picked by the

**LIC**  
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**The Year Changes,  
Trust Never Changes**

**2024**

**Thanking you for reposing your trust in us**

**LIC WISHES YOU A VERY  
Happy New Year**

LIC/P1/2023-24/1Eng

**EVENTS  
TODAY**

83rd Numaish

Time: 3 pm

Venue: Exhibition Ground

**Hyderabad Unlimited Bookfair**

Time: 10 am

Venue: Maruthi Gardens

**8th Telangana junior and sub-junior aquatics championship**

Time: 10 am

Venue: B.V. Gurumurthy Memorial MCH Swimming Pool

**Indian Photo Festival:**

Sunflowers Will Still Grow

Time: 10 am

Venue: Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad

**Silk Fab**

Time: 11 am

Venue: Sri Satya Sai Nigamagamam

**Art Exhibition: Abstract Realms and Enigmatic Scripts**

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Kadart Art Gallery

**Speech On Emerging Role Of India In Global Healthcare**

Time: 4 pm

Venue: TISS-Hyderabad

**Stand-Up Comedy by Rohit Swain**

Time: 6 pm

Venue: Aaromale

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# Hyd troops out to usher in New Year

Slow Sunday turns feverish as Hyd rings in 2024 with gusto, devout head out to places of worship

**RACHEL DAMMALA | DC**  
 HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

The City of Pearls bid adieu to the 2023 and welcomed the New Year with a multitude of celebrations, as a laidback Sunday ambience gave way to a pulsating energy as the skies darkened.

The Hyderabad Metro extended its operating hours past the usual 11-pm deadline, accommodating the influx of revellers. Despite the extended service, the trains operated with surprisingly few passengers, showcasing a city that seemed to prefer alternative modes of transport for their celebrations.

Buses, till the last service, were full as people started off to their hometowns to celebrate the short break.

The city's diverse populace came together at places of worship, with the faithful thronging churches for midnight 'watchnight services' that commenced at 10 pm. Temples resonated with special prayers and pujas, symbolising a shared desire to embark on the New Year with divine blessings.

Despite the festive fervour, businesses braved the night to cater to last-minute celebrators.



1. Girls in a joyful mood as they welcome the New Year in Hyderabad. 2. A family celebrates at the Necklace Road. 3. People buy cakes in Secunderabad. 4. People enjoy beside the musical fountain on PVNR Marg. 5. The Sun sets for the last time in 2023 behind the Secretariat.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE, P. SURENDRA

organised games and competitions in the night.

Hyderabad's nightlife took centre stage, with bars and pubs orchestrating special New Year shows, featuring DJs from around the globe, artistes from across the country and stand-up comedians taking to the New Year with laughter.

Clubs and restaurants across the city embraced the spirit of the night by offering enticing deals and packages to celebrate the New Year, while resorts and hotel chains offered stay-cations and night-long festivities, making Hyderabad a prime destination for those seeking a memorable start to 2024.

Shops and cafes, some operating under police protection, remained open well into the late hours, witnessing a surge in customer purchasing party

decorations and food until the eleventh hour. Liquor shops, in particular, experienced unprecedented demand, with patient customers waiting in queues

snaaking around the establishments.

A fitness organisation celebrated the transition into the New Year with a unique yoga session,

emphasising a serene and holistic approach to life. Terraces transformed into a spectacle of lights and cheers, while some societies and apartments

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## SHORT TAKES



Prof. K. Seetharamulu from the civil engineering batch of 1956 is being felicitated at University College of Engineering (A), Osmania University, Global Alumni Meet on Sunday.

— DC

### OU GLOBAL ALUMNI MEET FELICITATES 2 CIVIL ENGINEERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

Prof. K. Seetharamulu and V. Ramkishan Rao from the civil engineering batch of 1956, the oldest alumni, were felicitated at the University College of Engineering (A), Osmania University, Global Alumni Meet on Sunday. The event was being hosted after three years.

The general board meeting during the celebration provided a platform for alumni updates and networking. Festivities included stalls, games, and poster presentations on 'Perspectives and challenges in engineering on the moon'. Certificates and cash prizes were given to recognize outstanding academic achievements.

Dr D. Vijay Kumar and OU Vice Chancellor Prof. D. Ravinder and Dr D. Vijay Kumar were present at the event. Spectrum, a live band featuring students, entertained the gathering.

### POLICE WANT TO BID ADIEU TO BAD LUCK

FROM PAGE 1

The most recent suspension was of SI Satish Reddy for negligence in handling a land dispute issue, in which a person died — coming a few days ago.

Sources said that the staff at the Chintapalli police station were in fear over the continuous transfers and suspensions due to alleged irregularities. To rid themselves of the 'jinx', they decided to opt for the changes.

The police hired a JCB machine and initiated the levelling, with sources saying they wanted to bid adieu to the bad luck along with 2023 and discharge their duty without disturbance in the New Year.

### SUSPENSION OF SIS

**DECEMBER 11, 2023:** Nalgonda SP suspends SI Satish Reddy for negligence in a civil dispute case, wherein a man died.

**APRIL 23, 2022:** SP suspends SI Ramanjaneyulu and writer Yadagiri for alleged corruption.

**2019-20:** SI Narayana Reddy, facing corruption allegations, is transferred and attached to headquarters.

**2017-18:** SI Nagabhanusam is suspended for alleged corruption.

# Nearly 20L acres not accounted in Dharani

SoPs for cops in dealing with land cases flouted to help some

FROM PAGE 1

"The system would have been suitable when the land records are perfect and there are no title discrepancies or disputes. Nearly 20 lakh acres have still not entered Dharani," sources said adding that the same lacuna was exploited by influential people to lay their hands on valuable land parcels.

The affected parties have to approach the judiciary which is not only expensive as a certain portion of the land value should be deposited as court fee, but also time-consuming.

The revenue department

● AFTER NEW heads of three police commissioners – Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda – took charge, sources said people have been flocking to police with complaints of change in ownership in Dharani and forcible eviction in connivance of revenue and police personnel.

has been asked to study the possibilities of amending the existing Act and add the redressal mechanism. "To begin with we can consider some sort of tribunals at least at the erstwhile combined district level," sources point

ed out. After new heads of three police commissioners – Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda – took charge, sources said people have been flocking to police with complaints of change in ownership in Dharani and forcible eviction in connivance of revenue and police personnel.

"It is rather shocking that people who owned and are in possession of land for decades find themselves evicted overnight," said a senior police official adding that the standard operating procedures (SoPs) for police in dealing with land

cases were flouted to help the influential persons.

Sources said the officials had been gathering data on transfer of title to private parties over government lands as well as in aman and jagir land parcels on which government has been claiming ownership.

The data will also capture transfer of ownership from one party to another private party using Dharani. Sources said about three lakh acres which were kept out of Dharani had been legalised in last one year itself and forensic audit would reveal the genuineness of these transactions.



Devotees take out a procession of Lord Rama on the eve of Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on January 22, at Chaitanya Puri in Hyderabad on Sunday.

— P.SURENDRA

### LIGHT 'RAM JYOTHI' AT HOMES ON JAN. 22: KISHAN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

BJP state president and Union minister G. Kishan Reddy called on people to celebrate January 22, when the pran pratishthan of the Ram Mandir will take place, by lighting Ram Jyoti at home.

"The Ram Temple has

been built after a 500-year struggle," he said. "People are eagerly waiting for January 22 and I appeal to all Hindus to watch the programme online."

Addressing the media after attending the 108th edition of Mann Ki Baat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's radio talk, here, Kishan Reddy averred

that PM Modi would score a hat-trick in the ensuing parliamentary polls and retain power.

"The nation is progressing in all fields under Modi's leadership. He is upholding the prestige of the nation and self-respect of the people and is working for the poor through welfare schemes.

# First all-women satellite ready for launch today

FROM PAGE 1

XPOSat will study black holes, neutron stars and other intense X-ray sources by examining the polarisation of their X-rays. By studying the orientation of these X-rays, scientists hope to better understand the physics and processes powering some of the most-extreme and perplexing objects in the universe.

The primary payload, POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays),

will measure the polarisation of cosmic X-rays in the 8-30 keV (kilo electron volt) range, while a secondary X-ray spectrometer, XSPECT, will provide spectroscopic information in the energy range of 0.8-15 keV.

"XPOSat heralds a new era in Indian astronomy as our first dedicated polarimetry satellite,"

stated Isro in a release. "The insights it provides into magnetised cosmic objects like black holes and neutron stars will be invaluable."

Isro said the mission's objectives include mapping out magnetic fields around compact objects like black holes and pulsars, understanding the geometry and physics of the inner accretion disc surrounding black holes, and probing extreme physics like vacuum polarisation effects.

Along with XPOSat, the PSLV orbiter stage called the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module or POEM will also host experimental payloads from various private companies to test and qualify new space technologies. Isro seeks to support the emerging private space industry in India by providing orbital platforms for

such experiments, the space agency said in a statement.

Among its other payloads are a radiation shielding experiment module by TakeMe2Space, a women-engineered satellite by LBS Institute of Technology for Women, BeliefSat (an amateur radio satellite) built by KJ Somaiya Institute of Technology, a green impulse transmitter by Inspectry Space Labs Pvt Ltd.

Also on board will be LEAT-TD – launching expeditions for aspiring technologies – technology demonstrator – by Dhruva Space Pvt Ltd, Ruda 0.3HPGP and Arka 200 developed by Bellatrix Aerospace Pvt Ltd, dust experiment (DEX) built by Isro's Physical Research Laboratory, and fuel cell power system built by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre.

protect ancient monuments, which were damaged. A line repeated by staffers at multiple forts was: "Urmila Shukla, commissioner, archaeology, archives & museums, has asked us to strictly preserve the historical significance of the monument while executing restoration works."

Ashutosh Upadhyay, an archaeologist from the directorate, said that the concentration of lime mortar and other materials is taken into consideration while executing the restoration works and that preserving the historical significance is their utmost priority.

"Generally, people remember Rajasthan when they think about forts, but MP is an unexplored jewel with centuries-old engineering marvels that even comply with the current age 'Vaastu Shastra' norms," a second official from the directorate said.

a breathtaking view of the town, especially during sunrise. At this fort, not only do the archaeological staff guide tourists, but also local leader Dr Manoj Maheshwari.

Reporters, on a familiarisation trip to Madhya Pradesh, were told that the directorate of archaeology, archives and museums has intensified their efforts to

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### MUST SEE

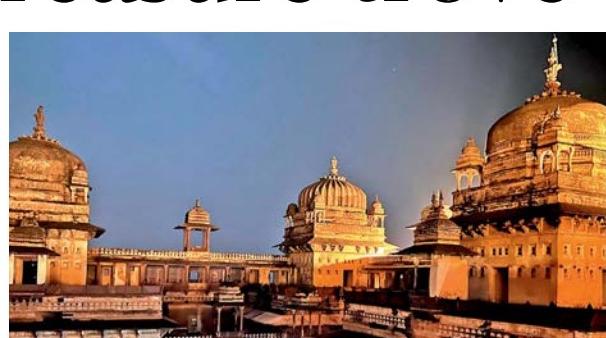
### Gwalior, Narwar, Jahangir Mahal boon for tourists

# MP, a treasure trove of forts

NABINDER BOMMALA | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

Madhya Pradesh, housing many historical monuments from different eras, including the Gwalior Fort, Moti Mahal in Gwalior, Narwar Fort in Shivpuri district and Jahangir Mahal in Orchha, among many others, is a boon for history enthusiasts.

The historic Gwalior Fort, among the earliest of the lot, for which the foundation was laid in the sixth century, boasts 10-metre-high walls and is impressively adorned with sculptures, which makes it a visual architectural treat for all. The light and sound show, similarly, at the Jahangir Mahal in Orchha, is a must-see, as it showcases the architectural beauty of Rajabir Singh Deo's construction in 1605-1626. The show takes visitors



A night view of the Jahangir Mahal in Orchha town in the Niwari district of Madhya Pradesh.

through important historical incidents, including a narration of the story of Lala Hardaula, who died after his sister-in-law poisoned him.

The Narwar Fort, situated atop a 500-foot hill, is the backdrop against which the love story of Nala and Damayanti developed and was referred to in the Mahabharata. It offers a

breathtaking view of the town, especially during sunrise. At this fort, not only do the archaeological staff guide tourists, but also local leader Dr Manoj Maheshwari.

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# KCR yet to take a call on contesting LS polls: Harish

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

Former minister T. Harish Rao on Sunday stated that former chief minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao was yet to decide on contesting the Lok Sabha elections from Medak.

The party had not taken any decision on Chandrashekhar Rao contesting the general elections, Harish Rao said while interacting with mediapersons here on Sunday.

The date will also capture transfer of ownership from one party to another private party using Dharani. Sources said about three lakh acres which were kept out of Dharani had been legalised in last one year itself and forensic audit would reveal the genuineness of these transactions.

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for the Lok Sabha elections takes effect.

Harish Rao alleged, "The state government is trying to delay implementation of the Six Guarantees."

He stated that people living in villages were lamenting that Rythu Bandhu scheme amounts were yet to be deposited in the accounts of farmers.



T. Harish Rao

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- 11 Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy College-Bhongir
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**WHERE SERVICE IS A WAY**

## IN BRIEF

**Chandana Deepi  
new Nalgonda SP**

**Hyderabad:** Chandana Deepi, 2010 batch IPS officer, who was waiting for posting, was on Sunday transferred as Nalgonda superintendent of police (SP). Incumbent Nalgonda SP Apoorva Rao was transferred as SP, Crime Investigation Department (CID). Deepi had worked as DCP, north zone, in the city earlier.

**BIRD HUNTER  
BREAKS GLASS OF  
VANDE BHARAT**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
WARANGAL, DEC. 31

The railway police here arrested a man when a stone he aimed at a bird with his slingshot hit the Vande Bharat Express train and broke a glass, at Kazipet in Hanamkonda on Sunday.

According to the Railway Protection Force circle inspector Ch. Sanjeeva Rao, the accused, Haribabu, 60, was a resident of Jangaon district. He has been killing birds for food.

On Friday, when Haribabu was hunting birds in the outskirts of Jangaon, a stone hit the No. 20833 Visakhapatnam-Hyderabad Vande Bharat Express and broke its glass.

Police registering a case and started an investigation and came upon Haribabu. He tried to explain that he had misfired and hitting the train was unintentional.

**TWO ARRESTED  
WHILE DUMPING  
CHEMICAL WASTE**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

The Cyberabad special operation team caught two persons red-handed while they were dumping untreated chemical waste from a pharma company into a nala in Jeedimetla.

Inquiries revealed that the waste was generated from a pharma company located at Chityal near Choutuppal in Yadadri Bhongir district.

As per the norms, the liquid waste has to be disposed of by after treating it. The accused collected the waste from the company, transported it to Hyderabad and dumped it in a nala.

**DRINKING WATER  
SUPPLY TO BE  
INTERRUPTED**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

Drinking water supply will be interrupted to some places in the city for 24 hours from 6 am of January 3, the water board said on Sunday.

These areas include Miryalai, Kishanbagh, Al Jubil Colony, Santoshnagar, Vinayagar Colony, Saidabad, Chanchalguda, Asmangadh, Yakutpura, Madanapet, Mahbub Mansion, and Aliabad in the Old City.

In the central part of the city, water supply will be interrupted in Narayanguda, Afzalgunj, Adikmet, Shivam Road, Nallakunta, Chilkalguda and Bogulakunta. In the eastern part of the city, the supply will be interrupted in Dilsukhnagar and Bonglur.

The water supply is being interrupted to facilitate the construction of the ramp of the proposed flyover connecting Nalgonda crossroads and Santoshnagar.

# Can't residents resent plan to end free water

**₹3/litre of groundwater beyond 100 litres/day proposed**

**RACHEL DAMMALA | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31**

A recently published draft regulation on digging and using borewells in Secunderabad Cantonment has stirred a wave of apprehension among residents, who may soon have to pay for extracting groundwater.

The proposed charges delineated in the draft aim to regulate and control consumption of groundwater in the region.

According to the draft, residents extracting groundwater of more than 100 litres per day will incur a charge of ₹3 per kilo litre. Commercial and industrial users extracting above 50 litres per day will have to shell out ₹10 per kilo litre.

The rates are in accordance with the 'Guidelines to regulate and control ground water extraction in India' issued by the Union Jal shakti ministry, and may be subject to amendments.

While the regulations stress the importance of proper documentation,

## PROPOSED CHARGES

- A draft regulation on borewells specifies user charges on residents
- Residents extracting more than 100 litres per day groundwater will incur a charge of ₹3 per kilo litre.
- Commercial and industrial users extracting above 50 litres per day will have to shell out ₹10 per kilo litre.
- Non-compliance can result in fines, suspension of permission and sealing of bore wells.

registration, and periodic checks to ensure the quality and sustainable use of groundwater, the proposed charges have raised concerns among residents and local entities.

Ravindra Sanki, general secretary of the local NGO Vikas Manch, expressed dismay, say-



- Regulations stress on documentation, registration, and periodic checks.
- Draft was released by the Union jal shakti ministry on Dec. 27

Users can send their views on the draft within 30 days.

are to take up the issue with the Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) and senior officials. Sanki emphasised the importance of considering the suggestions and objections of residents, citing past instances where such inputs were ignored.

The draft, issued on December 27, invites suggestions and objections from the public, which will be considered within 30 days from the date of notice. Non-compliance with the regulations, including selling extracted groundwater without permission, can result in fines, suspension of permission and sealing of bore wells. Highlighting the broader perspective, "the draft not only aims to regulate charges but also the need for sustainable water management. Residents and commercial entities are mandated to undergo rainwater harvesting and comply with various regulations to promote responsible water usage within the Cantonment," said an SCB official.

ing, "If it costs three rupees today, they will charge ₹20 in two years, and we can do nothing about it. We already have numerous issues regarding roads, drains and others. We don't need a new one involving something as basic as water." Vikas Manch and several residents

tendents and join the mainstream of society by starting life afresh in 2024, at least for the sake of your children" Babu said. Sounding a final warning to them, he said that if they are found involved in criminal

activities or if the police gets any complaint against them, they would be subject to strict action.

"Our surveillance teams will keep a watch on your movements. Give up such criminal

tendencies and join the mainstream of society by starting life afresh in 2024, at least for the sake of your

children" Babu said. Sounding a final warning to them, he said that if they are found involved in criminal

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# Positive sheets await reformers

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31



Rachakonda police commissioner G. Sudheer Babu counselling rowdy sheeters at a session at the LB Nagar camp office here on Sunday.

— P. SURENDRA

# Woman techie, MNC staffer held

**DC CORRESPONDENTS**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

**ENGINEER ARRESTED WITH DRUGS**

**DC CORRESPONDENTS**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

The Cyberabad special operations team nabbed a woman techie and MNC employee along with their friend at Rajendranagar and seized 8.5 grams of MDMA from them. The accused are identified as techie Sandhya, MNC employee David and their friend Arjun.

Police said the trio got acquainted through friends and gradually started consuming drugs and turned peddlers.

They would procure drugs from a friend identified as Febin in Bengaluru and supplied to their friends in Hyderabad.

In view of the heightened surveillance on drugs ahead of the New Year Celebrations, police got a tip off about their movements at Rajendranagar and nabbed them and seized MDMA from them.

There was a spate of arrests of drug peddlers in the city on New Year's Eve, the biggest of which included the seizure of cocaine, MDMA and brown sugar. Among the arrested was an engineer and some MNC employees.

West zone task force arrested an engineer, Sureela Naveen Sai, and another person identified as Borra Veera Sai Teja while they were trying to sell drugs near a liquor

shop.

He used to borrow from local moneylenders and app-based firms. When the pressure to repay grew, he started selling drugs, police said.

South-east zone task force and OU police arrested Kanukurthi Sai Naveen, 27, tea stall owner, and Chatla Vamshi, 19, daily wage earner, for peddling ganja and seized 2.6 kg ganja. They were selling the contraband to customers at Habsiguda, police said. Naveen confessed that he had procured 3 kg ganja from Odisha in the first week of December.

## GANJA SEIZED FROM TEA STALL OWNER

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## LB NAGAR SPL COPS ARREST THREE WITH HEROIN

The LB Nagar special operation team arrested Umesh Tiwari, 35, Suresh Dewasi, 26, and Ravla Ram, 26, and seized 15 grams of heroin from their pos-

sition at Meerpeta. The trio said they had procured the contraband from Rajasthan and were selling for three months, said Meerpeta sub-inspector K.

Sudhakar Tiwari, from UP, and Dewasi and Ravla Ram of Rajasthan, were drug consumers themselves and were working in a private firm here.

— P. SURENDRA

# Keep off civil disputes, SHO told again

**L. RAVICHANDER**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

The Telangana High Court has reiterated its directions to police officials to refrain from entertaining any civil dispute plea. Justice C.V. Bhaskar Reddy directed the station house officer (SHO), Karimagan Rural, and his subordinate officers not to interfere in civil disputes in a writ petition filed by Syed Moin. The petitioner contended that the respondents were threatening him of dispossessing by interfering in his peaceful possession. The property is 25 per cent undivided share out of the total area of 847.40 sq. yd in Survey No. 758/3 situated at Bommakal village. The petitioner alleged that

Kodityala Mallesha and others obtained building permission fraudulently due to which the police were interfering with his possession. The judge after perusing the material directed the respondent not to interfere in civil disputes and said any action should be done only in accordance with law.

## COPS SILENT DESPITE HC ORDER

In a contrasting matter, Justice C.V. Bhaskar Reddy was dealing with a case where police would not act against private parties even when there was a court injunction. The petitioner, Bandanadam Chinamma, complained that the station house offi-

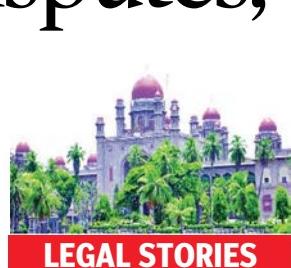
cer, Addagudur, had not registered an FIR and had failed to provide police protection for the transplantation of cotton in the land situated at Dharmaram village. The petitioner complained that the unofficial respondents were interfering with her peaceful possession and had been trespassing into the land despite the court's restraining order. The court, while adjourning

the matter, directed the petitioners to serve notice to the unofficial respondents and file proof of service by February 11.

## HC REFUSES PLEA AGAINST DRT ORDERS

A two-judge bench of the Telangana High Court yet again refused to entertain a writ petition against the orders of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) in view of the alternative remedy available under the statute. The bench headed by Chief Justice Alok Aradhe was dealing with a writ petition complaining that the DRT had failed to consider the action of IndiaBulls Housing Finance Ltd in dealing with the Covid instruc-

tions and circulars issued by the Reserve Bank of India and the Centre. Earlier, the petitioner had moved the DRT complaining that without reference to the parameters of Covid-related circulars and resolution framework, IndiaBulls had proceeded to wrongly declare his account as an non-performing asset (NPA). Reiterating its consistent view, the bench, speaking through the Chief Justice, made it clear that the petitioner could avail of the remedies available under the statute. The bench made clear that the time consumed in pursuing the present writ petition would not be considered for the purposes of limitation under the statute.



## LEGAL STORIES

## MINOR GIRL GOES MISSING, RAPED BY 10

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 31

Ten persons allegedly gang-raped a 17-year-old girl at different lodges in the IV Town area here, the police said. After the incidents since December 17, she fled the town. Her father filed a 'missing person' complaint on the day after she went missing. Police and other agencies traced the girl to Odisha on Dec 25.

Police said what was initially treated as a missing case transformed into a POCSO case, based on the girl's statement. The victim, employed as a maid servant here, was originally from Odisha. She moved to Visakhapatnam with her family nine months ago. She was sexually assaulted by her male friend and another boy in the lodge.

Subsequently, the victim was spotted at RK beach. A photographer, offering help, promised to take her to his friend's place. The photographer and seven others subjected her to further abuse and sexual assault for two days.

"She was raped in different lodges here for four days. Based on the statement of the girl, we are trying to arrest the accused," police said.

"The girl managed to free herself from the clutches of the gang, ADCP Srinivas said.

## WOMAN JOGGER COMPLAINS OF STALKER

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

A young woman was being stalked by a stranger near the KBR park for over a year. Following a complaint from her parents, Jubilee Hills police registered a case against the stalker and started a hunt to nab him.

The stalker was harassing her physically and on social media platforms. He intercepted the jogger two days back when she went to the park. She escaped from there and informed her family, who immediately lodged a complaint.

According to police, the stranger, identified as Praveen Chandra, started stalking her when she used to go out for jogging at a park in Begumpet. Unable to bear the harassment, she started going to the KBR Park. He contacted her through social media and found out about her residence.

In March when he tried to start a conversation with her, she did not reply. He started coming to the park regularly and waited outside her house. Even when she was abroad for a few months, he used to message or email her.

## DCA RAIDS QUACK, SEIZES ILLEGAL DRUGS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

The Drugs Control Administration (DCA) raided the premises of a quack identified as Gouraram Venkatesh of Uddemarri, of Medchal-Malkajgiri district who was passing himself off as a private medical practitioner, and was holding unauthorised stocks of medicines for sale.

V.B. Kamalasan Reddy, DCA Director-General, stated that officials had seized 38 varieties of medicines including antibiotics, steroids, anti-ulcer and antihypertensive medicines along with physicians' samples, all worth ₹1.65 lakh, during the raid carried out on Sunday at 'Mamatha Sri Clinic' that Venkatesh was running.

## GST evasion of ₹18.55 cr unearthed

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 31

The commercial taxes department has unearthed an alleged case of evasion of ₹18.55 crore GST by Sri Kavya Mining Infrastructures Private Limited, whose managing director Rajkumar Rekhyaa Roopsing Nayak has been arrested and remanded to custody.

In a release here on Sunday, commercial tax department commissioner Dr T.K. Sreedevi said Sri Kavya Mining Infrastructures Private Limited was accused of routing transactions without making the actual payment and issuing GST invoices in passing on the input tax credit (ITC).

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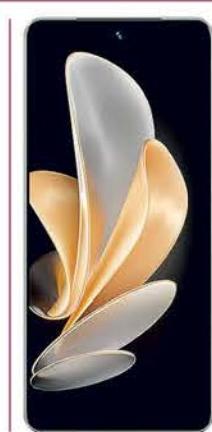
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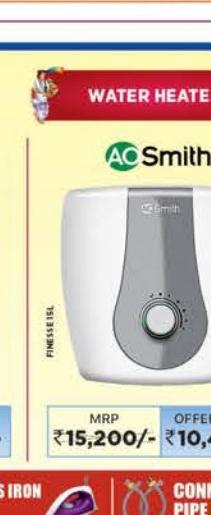
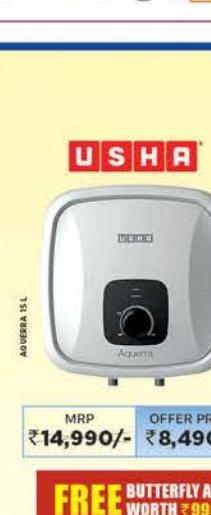


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## SCHEDULE FOR TODAY

SALAAR	TEL 2D (A)	08:45 AM, 10:00 AM, 12:10 PM 12:35 PM, 03:35 PM, 03:50 PM 07:00 PM, 07:05 PM, 10:10 PM, 10:25 PM, 10:30 PM
DEVIL	TEL 2D (UA)	10:00 AM, 01:25 PM, 04:00 PM 04:25 PM, 07:10 PM, 07:15 PM, 10:35 PM
BUBBLE GUM	TEL 2D (A)	07:20 PM
HI NANNA	TEL 2D (U)	12:55 PM, 10:35 PM
DUNKI	HIN 2D (UA)	09:05 AM, 01:05 PM, 04:00 PM 07:25 PM, 10:10 PM
AQUAMAN AND THE LOST KINGDOM	ENG 3D (UA)	09:55 AM, 05:55 PM, 10:30 PM
MIGRATION	ENG 3D (U)	12:35 PM, 08:35 PM
SAM BAHADUR	HIN 2D (UA)	04:15 PM
ANIMAL	HIN 2D (A)	09:25 PM

## UPCOMING ATTRACTIONS



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## SCHEDULE FOR TODAY

ASIAN RADHIKA - AS RAO NAGAR	(TICKET PRICE) DEVIL/BUBBLEGUM & 250/200 - DUNJI Rs 300/250 SALAAR/HI NANNA Rs 350/295
DEVIL-THE BRITISH SECRET AGENT[TEL-2D]A:	07:15AM, 1:25PM, 4:30, 7:45, 10:50-SALAAR[TEL-2D]A: 10:00AM, 1:05PM, 4:15, 7:20, 10:40 DUNKI[HIN-2D]A: 10:35-BUBBLEGUM[TEL-2D]A: 10:30AM, 1,10PM-HI NANNA[TEL-2D]A: 7:10PM
ASIAN CINEPLANET - KOMPALLY	(TICKET PRICE) DEVIL/BUBBLEGUM & 250/200 - SALAAR/DUNKI/HI NANNA Rs 350/295
DEVIL-THE BRITISH SECRET AGENT[TEL-2D]A:	07:20AM, 1:20PM, 4:30, 7:20, 10:55-SALAAR[TEL-2D]A: 10:10AM, 12:45PM, 4:00, 4:10, 7:20, 7:35, 10:15-BUBBLEGUM[TEL-2D]A: 10:20AM, 4:15PM, 7:20 DUNKI[HIN-2D]A: 1:10PM, 4:15, 10:35-HI NANNA[TEL-2D]A: 1:00PM, 7:45-VENKY[TEL-2D]A: 10:30AM
ASIAN CINE SQUARE - UPPAL	(TICKET PRICE) DEVIL/BUBBLEGUM & 250/200 - SALAAR/DUNKI/HI NANNA Rs 350/295

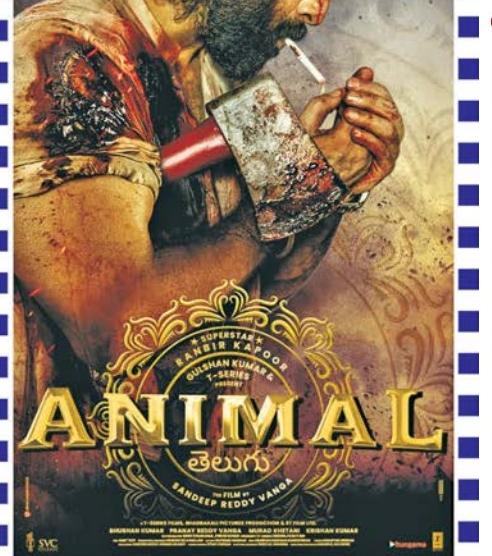
ASIAN M CUBE MALL - ATTAPUR	(TICKET PRICE) DEVIL/BUBBLEGUM & 250/200 - SALAAR/DUNKI/HI NANNA Rs 350/295
DEVIL-THE BRITISH SECRET AGENT[TEL-2D]A:	07:40AM, 10:40-SALAAR[TEL-2D]A: 10:00AM, 1:00PM, 4:15, 7:10, 10:35 SALAAR[HIN-2D]A: 7:25PM-BUBBLEGUM[TEL-2D]A: 10:20AM, 1:30PM, 10:50-DUNKI[HIN-2D]A: 10:25AM, 1:00PM, 4:05, 7:45, 10:50-HI NANNA[TEL-2D]A: 4:25PM
ASIAN LAKSHMI CINEPRIDE - MOOSAPET	(TICKET PRICE) DEVIL/BUBBLEGUM/HI NANNA/ANIMAL Rs 175/110/50 SALAAR: 175/150/50 - SARAKAAR NOOKARI/VENKY[TEL-2D]A: 11:15AM, 2:45PM, 9:45-BUBBLEGUM[TEL-2D]A: 10:20AM, 4:10PM, 4:35, 10:25-HI NANNA[TEL-2D]A: 9:45AM, 1:05PM, 10:55-SARKAAR NOOKARI[TEL-2D]A: 7:55PM-ANIMAL[TEL-2D]A: 4:00PM-VENKY[TEL-2D]A: 7:35PM
ASIAN CINE SQUARE - UPPAL	(TICKET PRICE) DEVIL/BUBBLEGUM & 250/200 - SALAAR/DUNKI/HI NANNA Rs 350/295
ASIAN CINE SQUARE - UPPAL	(TICKET PRICE) DEVIL/BUBBLEGUM & 250/200 - SALAAR/DUNKI/HI NANNA Rs 350/295

UPCOMING ATTRACTIONS



## HAPPY NEW YEAR

5TH WEEK



TELUGU VERSION

CINESQUARE-4.05PM

JP CINEMAS-4.05PM

Cinepolis LULU MALL-4.05PM

HINDI VERSION

INOX GV-1.40PM | MP MALL-3.20PM

ASHOKA ONE-1.05PM | NECKLACE-4.45PM

DSL MALL-6.40PM

SUDHA-1.00, 10.30PM

MANTRA MALL-4.00PM | CCPL-7.00PM

OAMB CINEMAS AMB MALL 11.55AM

4.15PM PRASAD'S

TIVOLI 9.40, 4.15, 11.00PM

PRESTONE-11.00PM | FORUM-10.35PM

L&amp;T GALLERIA-1.20PM

MUSARAMBAGH-10.30PM

IRRUMMANZIL-2.45PM

MALLAPUR-10.20PM | INORBIT MALL-11.05PM

CENTRAL MALL-10.40PM | ATRIUM-10.50PM

RK MALL-10.55PM | ICON HITECH-10.50PM

BALANAGAR-10.20PM | GEETH-10.50PM

MALKAJGIRI-10.50PM | MIYAPUR-10.50PM

GACHIBOWLI 12.50PM MOVIE MAX 3.50, 10.45PM

AMR MALL 3.50, 10.45PM

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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024 SHEESH MAHAL 70MM-AMEERPET 1

A new beginning from India



Foreigners who are celebrating the New Year in India go shopping at the Khan Market in New Delhi on Sunday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

## Govt bans TeH in J&K for 5 yrs

**Group spreading terror, anti-India sentiment in J&K, says HM Shah**

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 31

'Unlawful Association' under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The outfit is involved in forbidden activities to separate J&K from India and establish Islamic rule," Shah posted on 'X'.

The decision to ban the TeH was made under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, citing the group's propagation of anti-India messaging and its efforts to sustain terror activities, ultimately aiming to fuel secessionism in Jammu and Kashmir.

The decision announced by Union home minister Amit Shah, is a response to the group's involvement in fomenting terrorism and spreading anti-India sentiment within the Union territory of J&K.

The action came days after the Union home ministry banned the Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) for being involved in anti-national and secessionist activities and "inciting people to establish Islamic rule" in Jammu and Kashmir.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, the home minister emphasised that any individual or organisation found engaged in anti-India activities would face strict measures.

"The Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, J&K (TeH), has been declared an

unlawful association' under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The outfit is involved in forbidden activities to separate J&K from India and establish Islamic rule," Shah posted on 'X'.

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The TeH, previously led by the late Syed Ali Shah Geelani and succeeded by Masarat Alam Bhat, has been known for its anti-India and pro-Pakistan stance.

Bhat, currently incarcerated, also headed the banned organisation, Muslim League of Jammu and Kashmir, which was declared unlawful earlier in December.

The TeH was formed by Geelani in 2004 after he stepped out of the moderate Hurriyat faction led by Mirwaiz Umer Farooq.

Geelani, against whom several cases were registered, resigned from the Jamaat-e-Islami and formed this group, which later became a constituent of another faction of the Hurriyat, a separatist amalgam, led by the hard-line separatist.

## K'taka MP accuses CM of targeting his family

**● HOME MINISTER** too discarded Simha's charges saying those who violated the law have to face the consequences.

drag my family into this. You are trying to frame my brother," the MP alleged. Simha said the Chief Minister is targeting him to pave way for his son to win the Lok Sabha elections next year.

Pratap Simha was reacting to his brother Vikram Simha's arrest in connection with the felling of a large number of trees in a farm in Hassan to grow ginger. Vikram was arrested on Saturday evening and was taken to the hospital for a medical check-up today.

"My brother's name was not there in the FIR earlier. He wasn't even absconding. Yet, he was arrested," the Mysuru-Kodagu BJP MP told reporters here.

Simha further claimed that the CM will not stop with the arrest.

"For your (Siddaramaiah) son's political future, you will make all the efforts to trample Pratap Simha. You will defame me and

— PTI

## SURGE IN MARITIME SECURITY INCIDENTS ON MERCHANT VESSELS

FROM PAGE 1

The Navy asserted its commitment to ensuring the safety of merchant shipping in the region and highlighted its ongoing monitoring of the situation in collaboration with national maritime agencies. In recent weeks, a surge in maritime security incidents has been observed on merchant vessels traversing international shipping lanes in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Central and North Arabian Sea. The Indian Navy cited the hijacking of MV *Ruen*, occurring approximately 700 nautical miles from the Indian coast, and the drone attack on MV *Chem Pluto*, situated about 220 nautical miles Southwest of Porbandar as indicative of the evolving threat closer to the Indian EEZ.

The MV *Ruen* was reportedly taken by pirates to the territorial waters off Bosaso, Somalia, on December 17. Three new fatalities due to Covid — one each from Kerala, Karnataka and Bihar — have been reported in a span of 24 hours, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am. India had recorded 865 new cases on May 19.

The number of daily cases had dropped to double-digits till December 5, but cases have again gone up after emergence of a new variant and cold weather conditions. The daily numbers were in lakhs at the peak of the pandemic, which began in early 2020 and has seen more than 4.5 crore people getting infected and over 5.3 lakh deaths in about four years since then across the country. — PTI

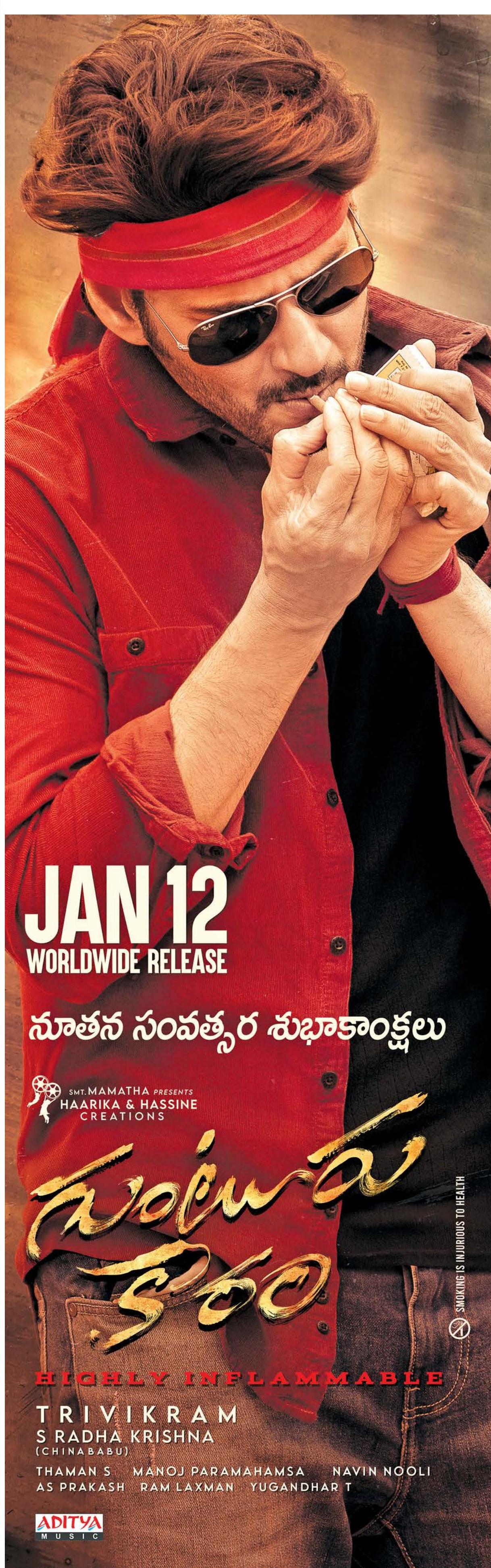
## INDIA RECORDS 841 NEW COVID CASES, REPORTS 3 DEATHS

New Delhi, Dec. 31: India has logged 841 new cases of Covid-19, the highest in 227 days, while the number of active cases of the infection have been recorded at 4,309, the health ministry said on Sunday.

Three new fatalities due to Covid — one each from Kerala, Karnataka and Bihar — have been reported in a span of 24 hours, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am.

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## SHORT TAKES

## DALIT WOMAN THROWN INTO HOT CAULDRON IN U.P.

Baghpat, Dec. 31: A young Dalit woman was allegedly thrown into a hot cauldron of a jaggery-making unit for protesting against molestation in the Budam district, police said on Sunday.

The 18-year-old woman, who sustained serious burn injuries, is undergoing treatment at the GTB Hospital in Delhi, police said, adding that three accused, including the cauldron owner, have been arrested.

Inspector-in-charge of the Binauli police station M.P. Singh said that the woman, a resident of Muzaffarnagar, worked at Pramod's cauldron in a village.

Lodging a complaint at the Binauli police station on Saturday, the woman's brother said that on Wednesday, she was working at the cauldron when Pramod, Raju and Sandeep allegedly molested and misbehaved with his sister.

## ANTI-MOAIST OP: CHHATTISGARH TO GET 3K JAWANS

New Delhi, Dec. 31: Three battalions of the BSF comprising more than 3,000 personnel will move across the border from Odisha to Chhattisgarh and an equal number of ITBP units will further move into the Naxal stronghold of Abujhmad as part of a strategy to intensify anti-Maoist operations in their last bastions, official sources said.

The new operational blueprint is part of a plan under which Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently made a declaration that India was "on the verge of" eliminating Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

"The last strike against LWE by forces such as the BSF, the CRPF and the ITBP is in the process. We are determined to end Naxalism in the country," Shah said on December 1 in Hazaribag, Jharkhand while addressing BSF troops on their 59th raising day.

## WORLD

## SHORT TAKES

## 'REUNIFICATION' WITH TAIWAN INEVITABLE: XI

Beijing, Dec. 31: China's "reunification" with Taiwan is inevitable, President Xi Jinping said in his New Year's address on Sunday, striking a stronger tone than he did last year with less than two weeks to go before the island elects a new leader.

Xi also said that China's economy has become "more resilient and dynamic than before" as he vowed to consolidate and strengthen the momentum of economic recovery and work to achieve long-term economic development.

## PAULA ACCUSES PRODUCER OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Los Angeles, Dec. 31: Paula Abdul has accused former *American Idol* producer Nigel Lythgoe of sexually assaulting her in the early 2000s when she was a judge on the reality competition show.

The lawsuit also accuses Lythgoe of sexually assaulting Abdul after she left *American Idol* and became a judge on Lythgoe's other competition show *So You Think You Can Dance*.

The Associated Press generally does not identify alleged victims of sexual assault unless they come forward publicly.

## SHADOW OF WAR

## Ongoing battles raging in Ukraine and Gaza have cast a pall over festivities

## Auckland becomes first major city to ring in 2024

Auckland, Dec. 31: Auckland has become the first major city to ring in 2024, with thousands cheering a fireworks display sprouting from New Zealand's tallest structure, Sky Tower, and a downtown light show.

This year's New Year's Eve celebrations are overshadowed by the ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza, which have cast a pall over festivities and heightened tensions across parts of the world.

Many cities are deploying extra security and some places have canceled New Year's Eve events altogether.

In Auckland, light rain throughout Sunday had cleared as forecast by midnight over the city of 1.7 million people before the countdown began on an illuminated digital display near the top of the 328-metre communications and observation tower.

Two hours later in neigh-

bouring Australia, the Sydney Harbour Bridge will become the focal point of a renowned midnight fireworks display and light show viewed annually by around 425 million people worldwide, according to city authorities.

More police than ever have been deployed throughout Sydney to ensure safety as the city's population converges on the harbour waterfront for the best available views, state government authorities said. Many revellers have been camping at the best vantage points since Sunday morning.

— AP



Fireworks burst from the Sky Tower in Auckland, New Zealand, to welcome the New Year. — AP

## Stones for Ram Temple being carved for 30 yrs

Workshop in Karsevakpuram evokes devotion for visitors

Ayodhya, Dec. 31: Ayodhya native Aarti religiously polishes a block of ornately carved stone weathered over the years as curious visitors walk around at a workshop running in the holy city for more than 30 years.

"These stones will be sent to the site of construction of the Ram temple being built in Ayodhya. We feel good that we are contributing to it," Aarti said while working.

She is among a group of women who perform this job every day from 8 am to 5 pm with an hour-long lunch break in between at Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas-run 'karyashala' in Ayodhya's Karsevakpuram. However, Aarti and a few other women workers put in 'extra 10 minutes' even after the official closing time of work. "It (extra time) is for bhagwan ji (the almighty)," says Aarti, who has been working on burnishing these faded stones for more than a year now.

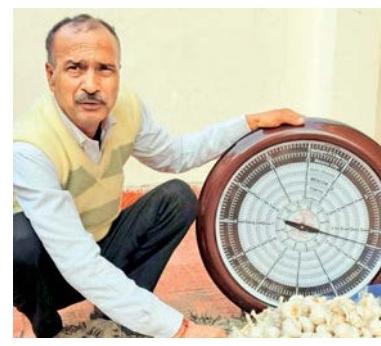
With an iron blade, she patiently removes inch by inch the black marks that have settled on the surface of the beautifully carved stone, a laborious job that tests both her physical strength and patience.

"Our wrist pains, but we rest our hands briefly in between," said Rita Devi, another worker employed on the job for which they get ₹12,000 a month.

The Supreme Court in a historic verdict in 2019 paved way for the construction of the Ram temple by a trust, and ruled that an alternative five-acre plot be given for a mosque in the Hindu holy town. Much has changed in Ayodhya since the verdict, but Karsevakpuram remains a curiosity corner of Ayodhya.



A worker polishes a carved stone at Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas karyashala, in Ayodhya. — PTI



Lucknow-based vegetable vendor Anil Kumar Sahu (52) gifts a clock measuring 75 cm in diameter and which shows the time in eight countries at the same time to the Ram mandir trust. — PTI

Many of them also visit the Karsevakpuram workshop, some out of devotion, others pulled in by sheer curiosity. Local guides also bring visitors to the sprawling 'Karyashala', which also houses a wooden model of a 'Ram temple'.

Otogenarian Annu Bhai Sompura, in-charge of the workshop, said on Sunday that though several blocks of carved stones have been 'sent to the construction site after being polished', the 'karyashala' still draws people in large numbers from different parts of the country.

"Huge number of people still come to see this place, the stones, the objects on display and first-timers

enquire inquisitively about the significance of the workshop," he claimed. The group of women who polish stones are from Ayodhya while male workers, who polish and also do some chiselling work, have come from Rajasthan, Sompura said. The artisans work from 8 am till 5 pm, and halt work only on days of Amawasya (New Moon Day). The Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas is supported by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

While Sompura claimed that some of these stones will be used in the main temple being built by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, there was

no official word on it from the trust yet.

An official source said, as the dimension of the Ram temple has increased from the one proposed earlier by the Nyas, these stones will be "used in construction of other structures" that will come up in the 70-acre temple complex. Some of the offices of the temple trust are operating from the Karyashala site in temporary structures. When visited the workshop on Friday, one such structure carried a poster, bearing the logo of the trust and an image of the envisioned temple with a label — 'Pran Pratishtha Samarth Samvad Kendra Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra'.

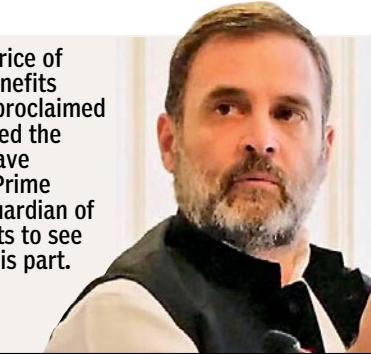
The temple complex, built in the traditional Nagara style, will be 380 feet long (east-west direction), 250 feet wide and 161 feet high. Ram temple trust general secretary Champat Rai told reporters here on December 26.

Each floor of the temple will be 20 feet high and will have a total of 392 pillars and 44 gates, he added. The wooden model of a temple earlier proposed by the Nyas, is kept in front of an old stone block bearing an inscription. An excited Ayodhya is eagerly waiting for the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple on January 22, and devotees and other visitors are pouring in from various parts of the country for a 'darshan' of the Ram Lalla, and catch a glimpse of the under-construction temple. Many of them also visit the Karsevakpuram workshop, some out of devotion, others pulled in by sheer curiosity.

— PTI

HAS THE price of political benefits received from a proclaimed Bahubali exceeded the tears of these brave daughters? The Prime Minister is the guardian of the nation, it hurts to see such cruelty on his part.

— Rahul Gandhi, Congress Leader



## SEAT-SHARING TALKS IN DMK FRONT TO START

N. RAVIKUMAR | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 31

The I.N.D.I.A. parties in Tamil Nadu plan to commence the seat sharing negotiations in the third week of January after Pongal celebrations. The parties want to complete the allocation of seats in January before working out a common minimum programme for governance at the centre.

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) leaders who met members of the alliance committee in New Delhi on Friday and Saturday have returned to Tamil Nadu. The leaders who spoke openly about demanding 15 constituencies for the party remain tight lipped after their return. Amidst reports of the DMK reducing the number of seats to be allocated to the Congress to six after the party had lost all the three Assembly elections in North India, TNCC leader K.S. Alagiri denied that the Congress had lost support.

## Rahul attacks Modi over award 'wapsi'

New Delhi, Dec. 31: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over wrestler Vinesh Phogat leaving her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award on national capital's Kartavya Path, saying the PM is the guardian of the nation and it hurts to see "such cruelty" on his part.

Gandhi's attack came a day after multiple World Championship medalist Phogat returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award, keeping the two awards lying in the middle of Kartavya Path after the Delhi Police stopped her from reaching the prime minister's office.

Phogat, along with Olympic medallists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, had protested against the election of Sanjay Singh, a close aide of former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharman Singh, who had been accused of sexual harassment by the three well-known grapplers.

Sharing a video of Phogat at the Kartavya Path, Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X, "For every daughter of the country, self-respect comes first, any other medal or honor comes after that."

— PTI

## 3 Naga groups to hold talks with Centre over Naga political issue

## ANTI-TALK FACTION OF ULFA (I) IS READY FOR TALKS: PARESH BARUAH

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, DEC. 31

Biswa Sarma's word on convincing the Centre to discuss the sovereignty issue during negotiations.

The commander of Ulfa-I leader reiterated that Ulfa (I) was not against dialogue, but wanted an assurance that the issue of sovereignty, which he said is Assam's political right, will be discussed.

joint political venture in 2024," said Akato, while addressing journalists after the meeting here in the presence of leaders of the other two groups.

Dimapur, Dec. 31: Three Naga groups have come together and decided to pursue negotiations for a solution to the decades-old Naga Political Issue with the Centre jointly.

The decision was taken on Saturday during a meeting attended by leaders of the three groups — National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) led by Akato Chophy, NSCN led by Khango and Naga National Council (NNC) led by Z. Royim. All three are splinter groups.

"The three groups have come together to have a

A day after signing of the peace accord with pro-talk faction, the Ulfa (Independent) chief Pares Barua who is leading the anti-talk faction of the outfit said that he was waiting for Assam Chief Minister Himanta

joint political venture in 2024," said Akato, while addressing journalists

after the meeting here in the presence of leaders of the other two groups.

## Ukraine shoots down 21 drones

Kyiv, Dec. 31: Kyiv said on Sunday it had destroyed 21 of 49 Iranian-made drones fired after Russia vowed to retaliate for what it called a "terrorist attack" on a border city that left 24 dead.

The Ukrainian air force said the "Shahed" drones were particularly targeted at "the front line of defence, as well as at civilian, military and infrastructure facilities in the front-line territories".

Six guided missiles had also targeted the north-eastern city of Kharkiv, Kyiv said, without specifying whether they had hit their targets.

The two sides took turns to accuse each other of pummelling civilian areas of their shared frontier region over the weekend.

The governor of Belgorod region, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said on Sunday that one person had been killed by Ukrainian shelling in a village close to the border.

— AFP

## CYPRUS SEA CORRIDOR PROPOSED

## KATZ IS FOREIGN MINISTER OF ISRAEL

The Israeli government on Sunday approved the appointment of Yisrael Katz as new foreign minister to replace Eli Cohen, who will become energy minister as part of a pre-arranged ministerial rotation, a government statement said.

under attack for a second time in 24 hours while transiting the Red Sea. The vessel had earlier been targeted with two anti-ship ballistic missiles that the US military shot down.

One of the missiles, both launched from Houthi-controlled Yemen, hit the Maersk Hangzhou.

The Houthis have repeatedly targeted vessels in the vital Red Sea shipping lane with strikes they say are in support of Palestinians in Gaza, where Israel is battling militant group Hamas.

The attacks are endangering a transit route that carries up to 12 per cent of global trade, prompting the United States to set up a multinational naval task force, Operation Prosperity Guardian on Dec. 19.

The United States says more than 20 countries had agreed to participate in the efforts to safeguard ships in Red Sea waters near Yemen.

— Agencies



This picture taken from the Israeli border with the Gaza Strip shows smoke billowing over central Gaza in the wake of Israeli strikes on Sunday. — AFP

## ISRAEL: LET SHIPS BRING AID TO GAZA

Israel is prepared to let ships deliver aid to the war-ravaged Gaza Strip "immediately" as part of a proposed sea corridor from Cyprus, the Israeli foreign minister said on Sunday.

## BIBI DEFENDS ISRAEL'S 'MORALITY'

PM Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel displayed unparalleled "morality" in the Gaza war and rejected South Africa's charge that it was committing "genocidal" acts in the Palestinian territory.

Deir Al-Balah, Dec. 31: Israeli strikes in central Gaza killed at least 35 people Sunday, hospital officials said, as the military targeted areas in several parts of the territory a day after the country's PM said "the war will continue for many more months," resisting international calls for a cease-fire.

The military said Israeli forces were operating in Gaza's second-largest city, Khan Younis, and residents reported strikes in the central part of the tiny enclave, after Israel this week made that region the new focus of its war.

The war has raised fears of a broader regional conflagration. Israel says it

wants to destroy Hamas' governing and military capabilities in Gaza, from where it launched its October 7 attack on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people, most of them being civilians and took 240 people hostage, according to Israeli authorities. The war has sparked a humanitarian crisis.

— AP

## Netanyahu hints at longer war

Deir Al-Balah, Dec. 31: Israeli strikes in central Gaza killed at least 35 people Sunday, hospital officials said, as the military targeted areas in several parts of the territory a day after the country's PM said "the war will continue for many more months," resisting international calls for a cease-fire.

— AP

Seoul, Dec. 31: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un wrapped up the year with fresh threats of a nuclear attack on Seoul and orders for a military arsenal build-up to prepare for a war that can "break out any time" on the peninsula, state media reported Sunday.

Kim lambasted the United States during a lengthy speech at the end of five days of year-end party meetings that set his country's military, political and economic policy decisions for 2024.

The meeting announced plans for further military development in the coming year, including launching three more spy satellites, building unmanned drones and developing electronic warfare capabilities, as well as strengthening nuclear and missile forces, according to the official Korean Cent

— AFP

## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	72,240.26
Nifty 50	21,731.40
S&P 500*	4,769.83
Dollar (₹)	83.20
Pound Sterling (₹)	105.72
Euro (₹)	91.94
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	63,189/14
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	77.57
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.176
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	3.886

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Mumbai sees record property registrations

Property registration in the Mumbai municipal area increased 4 per cent year-on-year to an all-time high of 1,26,907 units in 2023 on the back of better demand, according to Knight Frank. The previous high of 1,22,035 units was in the previous year, real estate consultant Knight Frank India data showed. The state got a revenue of Rs 10,869 cr as stamp duty in 2023, up 22 per cent from previous year.

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Expectations are mixed, volatility too may be good for some

## Markets to begin new year on strong footing

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, DEC. 31

Year 2024 will be an eventful year for the stock market with several big dates already lined up like the Lok Sabha election in the first half, Budget and RBI's rate cuts in the second half of the year. After four years, India has a strong start for the new year with fundamentals looking strong.

As the market has a high base with Sensex closing at 72,240 and Nifty-50 at 21,731, expectations are mixed with double digit returns expected this year. Volatility may provide smart investors even higher return if one waits for the right opportunity.

However, January has seen market correcting significantly several times since 2008 after a bull run. "One needs to be cautious as the valuation is



● FIRST HALF of the year will be dominated by elections, while the second half of the year will be shaped by monetary policy decisions, including expected rate cuts.

running ahead of fundamentals. However, large-caps could offer better risk-reward over the next few months," said Jitendra Gohil, CIO, Kotak Alternate Asset Managers.

"While 2023 commenced with restrained expectations and notable volatility, Indian market witnessed a remarkable recovery in the second half, from its March 2023 bottom. In 2024, the Indian economy will stand out due to the challenges with

nated by elections, while the second half will be shaped by monetary policy decisions, including expected rate cuts. The current market rally has already factored in potential outcomes and the possibility of up to three rate cuts by the US Fed. Heading into 2024, many positives are expected to be priced in, laying the groundwork for a potentially volatile market closer to these key events," said Rishabh Goel, managing director of Tailwind Financial Services.

"In anticipation of 2024 being a year of normalisation in the performance gap between large caps and broader markets, we recommend skewing portfolios towards large caps. We advocate considering balanced advantage and hybrid funds, offering a balance between equity and debt," said Goel.

RBI has also strengthened its forex reserves at \$620.44 billion adding \$58 billion in 2023.

"2024 promises to be

eventful. We anticipate the first half will be domi-

ment would seek expenditure approvals of Parliament for four months till July 2024 through a vote on account. The second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants from various ministries and departments ahead of the Budget session likely to commence in the last week of January.

This would be the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections and the govern-

ment would seek expenditure approvals of Parliament for four months till July 2024 through a vote on account.

The second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2023-24 is proposed to be placed before Parliament in the ensuing Budget session, the finance ministry said in an office memorandum. The cases that would be eligible to be incorporated under such demands

include those where advances from the Contingency Fund have been granted.

Besides, payments against court decree would be included as well as cases where the finance ministry has specifically advised moving the supplementary demand in the winter session, it said.

"While processing proposals for supplementary grants, the grant controlling authority must

invariably identify savings within the grant so that the infructuous or inflated supplementary demands are weeded out and the eventualities of surrender after obtaining the supplementary grant is avoided," it said.

To ministries are needed to submit their supplementary proposals by January 8.

The interim Budget 2024-25 is likely to be presented on Feb. 1. — PTI



PANAGARIYA IS  
16TH FINANCE  
COMMISSION  
CHAIRMAN

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 31

Arvind Panagariya, former Niti Aayog vice-chairman and former advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will lead 16th Finance Commission.

The government on Sunday appointed him as the chairman of the commission for recommending a devolution, formulated for tax revenues between the Centre and states, the ministry of finance said in an official order.

Generally, the government sets up a finance panel every five years to suggest the formula for sharing of taxes between the union and state governments.

The appointment order came a month after the government on Nov. 29, announced terms of reference for the 16th Finance Commission. It also asked the body to suggest measures for augmenting states' resources for local bodies besides reviewing the existing arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives.

Members of the commission would be notified separately.

Government appointed Ritvik Ranjan Pandey as secretary to the commission.

## IPOs end 2023 on positive note with 45% return

Mumbai, Dec. 31: In a year when the key equity benchmarks scaled new highs and rallied nearly 20 per cent making investors richer by close to ₹82 lakh crore, IPO investors laughed all the way to the bank as 55 of the 59 issues gave them handsome returns of 45 per cent on average.

In fact, 2023 turned out to be an outlier for primary market investors when 59 companies hit the street, raising ₹54,000 crore, and returned over 45 per cent more than the issue prices on average, according to exchange data.

The average listing gain for all the 59 IPOs is 26.3 per cent and their average gain as of December 29 is 45 per cent and only four of the 59 main-board IPOs are traded below the issue price on the trading session of the year on December 29.

As many as 23 of the 59 issues rallied more than 50 per cent since listing. Nine IPOs gave more than two-fold gains over the issue price. Iridia with 204% return is the best performer.



● AS MANY as 23 of the 59 issues rallied more than 50% since listing. Nine IPOs gave more than two-fold gains over the issue price. Iridia with 204% return is the best performer.

given 128 per cent over the listing price of ₹385.

Such a listing spree also made Dalal Street the second best in the world in the year after China with 240 issues worth over ₹60 billion in fundraising.

Analysts say strong macroeconomic fundamentals, political stability, optimistic corporate earnings outlook, signals from the US Federal Reserve about three prospective rate cuts next year and heavy retail investors participation played a major role in fuelling the stock market rally in the year.

The year saw as many as 27 million new investors entering the market. The rally resulted in nearly \$1 trillion addition to ₹4.3 trillion or ₹370 lakh crore market capitalisation, up 30 per cent. This is the eighth consecutive year of gains.

Investors turned richer by ₹81.9 lakh crore in 2023. In contrast, investors were richer by ₹16.38 lakh crore in 2022. — PTI

## GAMES

### SHORT TAKES

#### Mir Ali CA record twin victories

Hyderabad: MACA Mir Ali Cricket Academy registered two victories at the Col. C. K. Nayudu Free Entry Day-Night Junior Cricket Tournament for Boys and Girls held at the SCF Cricket Ground in Hyderabad on Saturday.

In the Under-14 category, MACA Mir Ali Cricket Academy defeated Discover Oaks School U-14 by 24 runs.

Later in the U-12 category, Mir Ali Cricket Academy recorded a 20-run victory over SCF Red U-12 by 12.

In another match, Redhills Cricket Club U-12 beat SCF Blues U-12 by 16 runs.

#### BRIEF SCORES

■ Under-14: MACA Mir Ali Cricket Academy 80/7 in 8 overs (Sai Sumanth 14 n. o., Srinivas Kalyan 13; Kushaal 2/12) bt Discover Oaks School U-14 54/4 in 8 overs (Dharuk 11, Ritvik Goud 11 n. o.; Sai Sumanth 2/2). ■ Under-12: MACA Mir Ali Cricket Academy 60/3 in 7 overs (Ibrahim Alam Khan 27; Sathwik K 2/11) bt SCF Red U-12 40/4 in 7 overs; Redhills Cricket Club U-12 42/4 in 6 overs (Hamdan Mushtaq 10; Dhannaram nursing 2/3) bt SCF Blues U-12 26/5 in 6 overs (Adnan 2/5).

#### Telugu Yoddhas edge past Odisha

Cuttack: Telugu Yoddhas held their nerves in the final 59 seconds to script a thrilling 29-28 win over defending champions Odisha Juggernauts in the Ultimate Kho Kho here on Sunday.

In an evenly-contested match, skipper Pratik Waikar claimed the most points (10) for the winning side.

Williams, the 2022 NBA Coach of the Year, said he

Also, Aditya Ganpule, Avdhut Patil and Akash Tagore spent more than five minutes on the mat, clinching crucial dream run bonus points for the Yoddhas. The Juggernauts were defending initially and made a frantic start, gaining three dream run bonus points in the opening turn.

The Yoddhas, however, bagged only 10 points before coming up with a bright performance, especially defensively during the second turn.

The group of Avdhut Patil, Pratik Waikar and Aditya Ganpule collected four dream run bonus points for the Yoddhas. — PTI

## PISTON BLOCK!

Detroit defeat Toronto to end 28-game losing streak



Detroit Pistons guard Cade Cunningham (left) drives during a NBA match against Toronto Raptors at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan, USA, on Saturday. Detroit won the game 129-127. — AP

hoped the win would prove to be a turning point for his team.

"Sometimes it just takes a win like that to get things started and I just have so much respect for our team. I think people may have thought that they were okay with losing. But they came in every day with a great spirit, and they wanted answers. They came in

wanting to learn and try to get better. So I just respect the heck out of our guys. Really happy that we finally got a win because it's so hard to win in this league," he added.

LeBron James suffered defeat on his 39th birthday as the Los Angeles Lakers were beaten 108-106 at the Minnesota Timberwolves.

James, who was on court for 39 minutes, put up 26

points on 10 of 21 shooting from the field with Anthony Davis top scoring for the Lakers with 33 points, 17 rebounds and eight assists.

With 3.1 seconds remaining, James thought he had tied the game at 107-107 with a three point throw right on the line of the arc but to his frustration the referee ruled it to be only a two point effort.

Anthony Edwards, who top scored for Minnesota with 31 points, added a point from the free throw line before James was off-target with an attempted buzzer beater.

The Miami Heat's four-game winning streak came to an end with a 117-109 defeat at the Utah Jazz with star Jimmy Butler suffering another injury setback.

"First match of the season so had some nerves, but happy with the way I was able to handle it," she said. Diez put up a decent fight against Jarry but brief lapses at the end of each set proved his downfall. "Steven is a grinder, a

## UNITED CUP

### Fernandez leads Canada to win

Sydney, Dec. 31: Leylah Fernandez, who ranked 35, got her country off to a perfect start in their Group 'B' tie in Sydney, cruising past Chile's Daniela Seguel 6-2, 6-3 in 73 minutes. In mixed doubles, Fernandez and Diez battled past Seguel and Tomas Barrios Vera 7-5, 4-6, 10-8.

With Canadian number one Felix Auger-Aliassime sitting out the men's singles, 314th-ranked Steven Diez stepped up but was toppled by world number 19 Nicolas Jarry 7-5, 6-4.

There is no night session at the mixed teams event in Sydney, given the traditional New Year's Eve fireworks.

Britain, who beat Australia to open their tournament account, took a 1-0 lead over the defending champions United States in Group 'C' in Perth when Jessica Pegula crashed 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 to Katie Boulter.

The 21-year-old broke over a top-five player on her seventh attempt after she bounced back from a set and double-break down. Pegula's 10th-ranked teammate Taylor Fritz takes on Cameron Norrie later.

Also in Perth, Novak Djokovic will play his season opener for Serbia against China's Zhang Zhizhen, with the Chinese team on a high after beating the Czech Republic 3-0 in Group 'E'. — AFP



Leylah Fernandez of Canada hits a return against Daniela Seguel of Chile during their women's singles at the United Cup tennis tournament on Sunday. — AFP

## Murray says 2024 could be last year on tour

Brisbane, Dec. 31: Two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray said 2024 could be his final year before retirement after illness and injury hampered his preparation for the new season.

Murray's year will begin at the Brisbane International as he builds up for the Australian Open later in January.

The 36-year-old is ranked 42nd in the world after a frustrating end to 2023, when he won just one match in his last four tournaments.

Murray has previously battled back from what seemed impending retirement after undergoing hip surgery in 2018.

But he conceded that he will bring down the curtain on his career if the next 12 months follow the same pattern as 2023.

"We'll see how the year goes, see how the body holds up. If things are going well, I'd love to keep going. But if they're not, and I'm not enjoying it, it could be the last year, yes," he added. Murray, who won Wimbledon in 2013 and 2016 and also took the US Open title in 2012, is part of a golden generation coming towards the end of trophy-laden careers.

Roger Federer retired in 2022 and Rafael Nadal had an injury-blighted 2023, although the Spaniard has suggested he might try to play on beyond 2024.

At 36 Novak Djokovic is still hoping to add to his record 24 Grand Slam titles before hanging up his racket. — AFP





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